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ABSTRACT

The study reported here was designed to describe Title I school-parent compact development and implementation across a sample of five schools with promising compacts. The four findings and guidelines for developing compacts highlight the varied experiences of five Title I schools, each of which demonstrates a broad base of support for strong partnerships to help all children achieve high standards. The findings are intended to help schools develop effective compacts and strengthen parent-involvement practices. For the study, 150 compacts from Title I elementary and secondary schools from across the country were requested. Compacts were examined to determine who was responsible for student progress and other issues. Five compacts from the most promising schools were selected. The results show that all five schools adopted a broad definition of the school-parent compact as one part of a comprehensive partnership between schools and families. Stakeholders in all five schools reported an active, inclusive development process, and they measured success in how the compacts were used--each school tried varied strategies to keep the compact visible and on the agenda, which proved a difficult challenge for stakeholders. Finally the schools' stakeholders viewed their compacts as a "work in progress" and planned for early and regular evaluation. (RJM)

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Final Report

1998

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Title I School-Parent Compacts: Supporting Partnerships to Improve Learning

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1998

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LEGAL PROVISIONS REGARDING SCHOOL-PARENT COMPACTS

Public Law 103-382, *The Improving America's Schools Act*, Section 1118 (d), amends Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act:

"As a component of the school-level parental involvement policy developed under subsection (b), each school served under this part shall jointly develop with parents for all children served under this part a school-parent compact that outlines how parents, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student achievement and the means by which the school and parents will build and develop a partnership to help children achieve the State's high standards.

Such compact shall—

(1) describe the school's responsibility to provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment that enables the children served under this part to meet the State's student performance standards and the ways in which each parent will be responsible for supporting their children's learning, such as monitoring attendance, homework completion, and television watching; volunteering in their child's classroom; and participating, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children and positive use of extracurricular time; and

(2) address the importance of communication between teachers and parents on an ongoing basis through, at a minimum—

(A) parent-teacher conferences in elementary schools, at least annually, during which the compact shall be discussed as the compact relates to the individual child's achievement;

(B) frequent reports to parents on their children's progress; and

(C) reasonable access to staff, opportunities to volunteer and participate in their child's class, and observation of classroom activities."

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Executive Summary

The 1994 Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) restructured all parts of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), including Title I. The new Title I focuses on assisting disadvantaged students to meet the same high academic standards expected of all other students. The amended law also encourages schools to plan for strong school-family-community partnerships in support of student learning. Title I parent involvement provisions emphasize policy involvement at the school and district level, the development of school and parent capacity for productive mutual collaboration, and shared school-family responsibility for high academic performance, as expressed in school-parent compacts. At its most basic level, the Title I compact is a written commitment developed at the school that indicates how all members of a school community agree to share responsibility for improving student achievement.

The study reported on here was designed to describe Title I school-parent compact development and implementation across a sample of five schools with promising compacts. The following findings and guidelines for developing compacts highlight the varied experiences of five Title I schools, each of which demonstrates a broad base of support for strong partnerships to help all children achieve high standards. The findings are intended to help schools develop effective compacts and strengthen parent involvement practices.

Finding #1 **All five schools adopted a broad definition of the school-parent compact as one part of a comprehensive partnership between schools and families.**

All five schools have adopted a broad interpretation of the school-parent compact, viewing the written compact between the school and parents as part of a larger parent involvement effort rather than as an end in itself. At four of the five schools, the compact served primarily to reinforce a well-established and comprehensive parent involvement philosophy and program. Each of these four schools had an "open door" policy toward parents and provided many opportunities for them to be active in their children's education and in the life of the school. At the fifth school, the compact served as a catalyst to expand the school's parent involvement program.

Finding #2: **Stakeholders in all five schools report that an active, inclusive development process is essential.**

Although the process used to develop the compact varied across schools—some began with existing school governance or planning teams, while others created teams of stakeholders with the sole purpose of developing a compact—key process elements exhibited across the five schools include: (1) attention to strategies to improve student achievement and learning; (2) consistency with school philosophy and existing school reform efforts; (3) attention to the needs and interests of families in the

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philosophy and existing school reform efforts; (3) attention to the needs and interests of families in the school and local community; (4) involvement of parents and staff at each stage of the process, from start-up to review and evaluation; (5) input and feedback from a larger constituency of stakeholders than those actually drafting the compact; and (6) use of model compacts as a resource but not a shortcut.

Finding #3 **One measure of the success of compacts is whether and how they are used. The five schools are trying varied strategies to keep the compact visible and on the agenda, but this is a difficult challenge for stakeholders.**

To implement a compact successfully, schools must introduce it to stakeholders, build stakeholder support for the compact, and maintain the initiative by assisting stakeholders in fulfilling their responsibilities. Each school we visited demonstrates attention to using the compact in these ways by implementing innovative activities and programs or by taking advantage of successful partnership activities already in place. Stakeholders across the five schools, however, said that it is difficult to maintain active support and recognition for the compacts after their initial introduction to the school community. Over time, discussions and activities specifically focused on the compact become less visible and, at times, make its impact questionable.

Finding #4 **Stakeholders across the case study schools view their compacts as a "work in progress" and plan for early and regular evaluation.**

Compacts in the case study schools have been implemented for no more than one year. Stakeholders across all of the schools view the compact as a work in progress and plan to evaluate their compacts regularly to improve or strengthen them. Even though the compacts are new in these schools, stakeholders in four of the five schools have conducted some type of evaluation already. They have used both more formal strategies such as surveys or focus group interviews as well as informal discussions with stakeholders.

Experience in a small sample of Title I schools with strong support for school-family partnerships points to several suggested guidelines for creating a promising school-parent compact, using the compact to help all children achieve high standards, and evaluating and strengthening a compact.

To create a promising compact:

- Support and build on the compact with a comprehensive partnership between schools and families
- Pay close attention to process.
- Gear the content toward helping all students meet high standards.

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To use the compact to help children achieve high standards:

- Take advantage of varied ways to introduce the compact to as many families as possible, including special open house or PTO events, sending the compact home with all students, and introducing the compact at parent-teacher-student conferences.

To evaluate and strengthen the compact:

- Consider the compact to be a "work in progress" that can always be improved. Think broadly about evaluation and use multiple measures of success, which may include: (1) changes in knowledge on the part of parents and educators about the existence of the compact and its purpose as well as about helping all children achieve to high standards, (2) levels of parent participation in school-related activities, and (3) changes in student achievement.

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Title I School-Parent Compacts: Supporting Partnerships to Improve Learning

Policy Context for This Study

The Improving America's Schools Act (IASA), signed into law on October 20, 1994, restructured all parts of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), including Title I. The new Title I focuses on assisting disadvantaged students to meet the same high academic standards[1] expected of all other students. Because families can exert a powerful influence on children's achievement in school, the new Title I also concentrates on strengthening family involvement in education. Research over the last 30 years shows that, when families actively participate in their children's education, children earn higher grades and score higher on tests, attend school more regularly, complete more homework, display more positive attitudes and behaviors, graduate from high school at higher rates, and are more likely to enroll in higher education than students whose families are less involved (Eagle, 1989; Ziegler, 1987). The new Title I encourages schools to plan for strong school-family-community partnerships in support of student learning in many different ways. Title I parent involvement provisions emphasize policy involvement by parents[2] at the school and district level, the development of school and parent capacity for productive mutual collaboration, and shared school-family responsibility for high academic performance, as expressed in school-parent compacts.

Every school receiving Title I funds must develop a compact. School-parent compacts spell out the goals, expectations, and shared responsibilities of schools and parents as partners in helping all children learn and achieve to a community's and a state's challenging standards. The compact is a written commitment indicating how all members of a school community—teachers, parents, principals, students, and concerned citizens—agree to share responsibility for improving student achievement. Specifically, the Title I compact identifies shared responsibilities to (1) help children achieve to high standards; (2) communicate effectively and frequently between home and school; (3) build capacity for the school-family partnership through volunteering and training; and (4) include parents in decisions that affect the school and their children. Ideally, the compact brings both agreement and action on

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[1] Part A of Title I of ESEA is designed to enable children in high poverty schools to meet their states' challenging academic content and performance standards, which must be implemented beginning with the 1997-98 school year. Content standards describe what every student should know and be able to do in the core academic subjects. Performance standards answer the question of how good is good enough or how well have students met the content standards established by the state or community.

[2] The word "parent" applies to all adults (e.g., grandparents, care givers, guardians) raising children and working with the schools.

these shared responsibilities, forming a partnership among the school, families, students, and the community to help all children learn and achieve to high standards.

It is important to remember, however, that Title I requirements for parent and community involvement cover a wide range of activities to support effective partnerships. Parents, teachers, and other educators need to view the compact within this broad framework. Ideally, the compact will be just one of many ways schools and families plan for and communicate about children's education and success in school.

> *"The rationale behind the compacts is that parents are the most influential people in a child's life and early education. They can be powerful partners with schools, working together to make sure that children reach high academic standards. Let's look at how school-parent compacts fit in with the larger context of school reform."*
>
> From the Auburn (Maine) School Department School-Parent Compact Facilitator's Guide

Study Methods

The study reported on here was designed to describe Title I school-parent compact development and implementation across a sample of five schools with promising compacts. To select the schools, we requested over 150 compacts from Title I participating elementary and secondary schools across the country. We used several sources to identify schools from which to collect compacts, including:

- Schools highlighted by the Title I Recognition Program[3]
- Goals 2000 Blue Ribbon schools recognized for their parent involvement activities[4]

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[3] Now in its 13th year, the Title I Recognition Program recognizes schools with outstanding Title I projects. As part of the selection process, state education agencies nominated successful projects, and an independent panel evaluated the project's effectiveness in raising student achievement levels. The criteria used to select winners included partnerships among schools, parents, and communities.

[4] The Blue Ribbon Schools Program (BRSP), established in 1982, exists to (1) identify and publicly recognize outstanding public and private schools across the United States; (2) offer a framework of key criteria for school effectiveness that can serve as a basis for self-assessment and planning in schools; and (3) facilitate communication and sharing of best practices within and among schools, based on a common understanding of criteria related to success. The Knowledge Applications Division of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement administers the BRSP.

- Twenty schools with successful local approaches to family involvement in children's education highlighted in a U.S. Department of Education (ED) report entitled *Overcoming Barriers to Family Involvement in Title I Schools: Report to Congress*

- Schools recommended by state Title I directors

- Schools recommended by ED's Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers[5]

When we received a compact, we reviewed its content to determine if the compact addressed each specific requirement contained in the legislation. These requirements (which appear at the beginning of this report) include a set of specific activities (e.g., parent-teacher conferences in elementary schools, during which the compact shall be discussed as it relates to the individual child's achievement). Very few compacts we received refer to each specific activity referenced in the legislation. Of those schools that did address each requirement, subsequent interviews with school staff and parents often revealed that the compact development process was not an inclusive one that involved all stakeholder groups. Because so few compacts addressed every requirement, we did not automatically exclude a compact from consideration for this reason.

We also examined compacts to determine who was responsible for student progress and selected those that covered a broad range of responsibilities. The range of different responsibilities includes those for curriculum and instruction, staff development, school learning environment (e.g., holding high expectations for students, student behavior), student assessment, parent-school communication (e.g., annual conferences), parent participation (e.g., opportunities for parents to participate in and observe their child's classroom), and the home learning environment (e.g., encouraging the child to read, monitoring television viewing).

Next, for schools remaining in the selection pool, we conducted telephone interviews with the principal as well as a teacher and a parent whom the principal recommended. We gathered school background data and inquired about the process of developing the compact, its implementation, its use and evaluation, related parent involvement activities at the school, and evidence of success of the school program and of parent involvement activities (e.g., student outcomes, parent participation in school-related activities). As a result of these interviews we excluded many schools from consideration because the compact development process was not both deliberate and open to all

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[5] The role of the Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers is to support and assist states, school districts, schools, tribes, community-based organizations, and other recipients of funds under the IASA by providing technical assistance in: (1) implementing school reform to improve teaching and learning for all students; (2) adopting, adapting, and implementing promising and proven practices for improving teaching and learning; and (3) coordinating IASA recipients' school reform programs with other educational plans and activities so that all students, especially students at risk of educational failure, are provided opportunities to meet challenging state content and performance standards.

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relevant stakeholders (e.g., particular stakeholders such as parents or teachers were excluded from the process, the school simply adopted a sample compact provided by the school district without tailoring the compact in any way). We excluded other schools because they offered little support (such as school-sponsored activities or workshops) for family involvement, or because the school offered little evidence of success of either the school program or of partnership efforts.

We selected ten candidate schools that had developed promising school-parent compacts. These schools offered varied parent involvement activities and other stakeholder supports, and were the result of an inclusive development process that involved all stakeholders. All ten of the schools demonstrated evidence of success of their partnerships with parents.

From these ten candidates, we selected five schools representing a range of grade levels and regions of the country for case study site visits, during which we collected more detailed information and materials and met with several school staff, parents, students, and district representatives, and also observed partnership activities first hand. The findings and detailed examples included in this report are from these five case study sites.[6]

Brief profiles emphasizing compact development and implementation in the five case study schools are presented at the end of this report; the compact for each school is attached to its profile. The schools are:

- **Bemiss Elementary in Spokane, Washington.** Bemiss serves a mobile, urban population of 561 students in grades K-6. Although the student population is predominantly white, many students are recent immigrants from Russia or the Ukraine. Eighty-six percent of students are eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch.

- **Jackson Preparatory Magnet in St. Paul, Minnesota.** Located in St. Paul's poorest neighborhood, Jackson serves a diverse group of 430 students in grades K-6. Thirty-nine percent of the students are white, 34 percent are Asian (mostly Hmong), 19 percent are African-American, 6 percent are Hispanic, and 2 percent are Native American. Eighty-three percent of the students receive free- or reduced-price lunch.

- **Clinton Kelly Elementary in Portland, Oregon.** Clinton Kelly Elementary is located in the Lents neighborhood in Portland, a poor urban neighborhood that suffers from high unemployment and crime rates. It serves 553 students in grades K-5. The student population is primarily white (86 percent) with a large number of language-minority

[6] We did not include information for all ten candidates in our findings because the information collected on site was significantly more detailed than that collected during telephone interviews, and therefore not comparable across all ten schools.

Russian students (15 percent of the total student population). Seventy-one percent of the student population is eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch.

- **Roosevelt High in Dallas, Texas.** At Roosevelt High 99 percent of the students are from minority families. The principal estimates that roughly 80 percent of students enrolled are eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch.

- **Sherwood Heights Elementary in Auburn, Maine.** Located in a rural setting, Sherwood Heights enrolls over 500 students in grades K-6. During the 1996-97 school year, Sherwood Heights served about 350 students in grades K-3; beginning in fall 1997, students through grade 6 will also attend the school. Ninety-nine percent of the school's students are white, and roughly 50 percent of the students transfer into or out of the school each year. Sixty-one percent of the student population is eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch.

The following findings highlight the varied experiences of five Title I schools with a broad base of support for strong partnerships to help all children learn to high standards. We organized the findings within the general framework presented in ED's handbook entitled *A Compact for Learning: An Action Handbook for Family-School-Community Partnerships*, which is designed to guide a school's family-school compact team through the steps of building a compact. We introduce some of our findings by drawing on the handbook's recommendations.

Creating a Compact for Learning

Although the five schools visited for this study took varied approaches to creating their compacts, across the schools we found that: (1) schools had adopted a broad view of the school-parent compact requirement; and (2) stakeholders believe that the process of compact development is key to stakeholder acceptance of the compact.

Finding #1	**All five schools adopted a broad definition of the school-parent compact as one part of a comprehensive partnership between schools and families.**

In their article on strategies for implementing IASA's school-parent compact requirement, Epstein and Hollifield (1996) describe two ways that schools might choose to interpret the compact requirement. They suggest that the legislative requirement can be interpreted *narrowly* to define the compact as a contract or pledge that teachers, parents, and students sign to promise to fulfill certain responsibilities, or *broadly*, to define the compact as a plan to create a comprehensive program of school, family, and community partnerships. The authors assert that the narrow definition makes a

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compact "a mechanical or symbolic activity," and recommended that schools adopt the broad interpretation, which may include but is not limited to school-parent agreements or pledges.

All five schools have adopted a broad interpretation of the school-parent compact, viewing the written compact between the school and parents as part of a larger parent involvement effort rather than as an end in itself. At four of the five schools—Bemiss Elementary, Jackson Preparatory Magnet, Kelly Elementary, and Roosevelt High—the compact served primarily to reinforce a well-established and comprehensive parent involvement philosophy and program. Each of these four schools had an "open door" policy toward parents and provided many opportunities for them to be active in their children's education and in the life of the school. At Bemiss Elementary, for example, parents were already integrally involved in the school's educational reform efforts through the Parent Connections Action Team, a group of parents and teachers that works to build school-community linkages, and the School Site Council (a planning and governance body), which offers membership to all parents who are interested in joining. Similarly, at Kelly Elementary parents had already been invited into the school to serve as partners in their children's learning through the Family Stories Program, in which parents and children write and illustrate stories about their families, and regularly scheduled Family Involvement Nights, such as family math or science nights.

> *"I don't know if the compact can be separated from the overall philosophy and working structure that's already in place... The compact is only part of what's going on here."*
>
> Parent, Bemiss Elementary

At Sherwood Heights Elementary, however, the compact served as a catalyst to expand the school's parent involvement program. Prior to compact development, parent involvement activities at Sherwood were limited to a parent volunteering program, a traditional Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO), and parent attendance at school performances and parent-teacher conferences. Although parent workshops about how to support children's learning were held quarterly, only Title I parents were invited to attend. The district offered some parenting workshops, although few Sherwood parents attended. As a result of the compact development process at Sherwood, however, parents became more engaged in school planning and helped to develop several new parent involvement strategies and activities to be implemented for the 1997-98 school year. These strategies include a continuation of the compact development committee as a part of the existing PTO, parent workshops on Maine's Learning Results standards and how to help their children academically at home, a newsletter devoted to compact implementation issues, and family library nights (designed to build parents' comfort using library resources so that they will begin to use libraries more often with their children).

Finding #2: Stakeholders in all five schools report that an active, inclusive development process is essential.

The school-parent compact is a commitment indicating how all members of a school community agree to share responsibility for helping children achieve to a community's and a state's high standards. To secure this commitment, the process of developing a compact must include all stakeholders. Parents of students receiving Title I services are required to participate in developing a compact. However, schools need to encourage as many parents as possible to participate to strengthen the school-family-community partnership. In addition, the compact development process must facilitate a discussion of school goals and expectations for student learning, and determine each stakeholder group's responsibilities for helping students to achieve these goals and expectations. Stakeholders across the five schools visited indicated that the compact is not just a piece of paper but a process, and that the first step in developing a compact that stakeholders will buy in to is attention to this process.

Although the process used to develop the compact varied across schools—some began with existing school governance or planning teams, while others created teams of stakeholders with the sole purpose of developing a compact—key process elements exhibited across the five schools include: (1) attention to strategies to improve student achievement and learning; (2) consistency with school philosophy and existing school reform efforts; (3) attention to the needs and interests of families in the school and local community; (4) involvement of parents and staff at each stage of the process, from start-up to review and evaluation; (5) input and feedback from a larger constituency of stakeholders than those actually drafting the compact; and (6) use of model compacts as a resource, but not a shortcut.

Attention to strategies to improve student achievement and learning. Compact developers at the five schools focused their brainstorming efforts and discussions on strategies to improve student achievement and learning. In some instances the process focused specifically on achieving the state's high standards. At Bemiss Elementary, for example, staff discussed the need to assist each child in achieving the state's standards—Washington State's Essential Academic Learning Requirements—and ultimately included this as a teacher responsibility listed in the school's compact. Similarly, at Roosevelt student scores on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS)—which is the state test all students must pass in order to graduate from high school—and strategies to improve those scores played a key role in determining parent and school responsibilities. Roosevelt's compact also clearly states that the purpose of the compact is "to communicate a common understanding of home and school responsibilities to assure that every student attains high standards and a quality education."

> *"The process is valuable. Everyone wants the same thing for kids, and you find that out. The main things here are safety and responsibility for students' achievement. [The compact is] a way to say that we are all important [to ensuring school safety and student achievement]."*
>
> Parent, Jackson Preparatory Magnet

At Sherwood Elementary, compact developers received training in the state's standards for student achievement as a part of the compact development process. At the three compact development meetings, the school's compact facilitator instructed parents in the definition of a standard and gave examples of language arts and math standards included in Maine's Learning Results (the state's content standards and performance indicators).

> *"Content and assessment are important and need to be part of the conversation parents have with teachers."*
>
> Representative, Auburn School District, Maine

In addition, compacts in four of the five schools studied—Bemiss, Jackson, Clinton Kelly, and Sherwood Heights—include parent responsibilities for assisting their children educationally outside of the regular school day through home learning activities. These responsibilities ranged from limiting television viewing to more active parent participation, such as assisting their child with homework or talking to their child about his or her day. These four compacts also stress the importance of parents ensuring that their children read at home. Of the four schools that address home learning activities, Sherwood Heights most heavily emphasized parents helping children educationally outside of school. In addition to the examples above, the Sherwood compact suggests that parents "visit libraries, museums, and cultural events" and "encourage extra work at home (e.g., with workbooks, software, journals, games)."

Consistency with school philosophy and existing school reform efforts. In all schools visited the compact reflected the school's philosophy on teaching and learning and ongoing reform efforts. Often, the compact and other school documents share a common purpose and language. At Kelly

> *"You have to live by it... [the compact] has no meaning unless it is embodying the spirit of the school, the way the school does business."*
>
> Principal, Clinton Kelly Elementary

Elementary, for example, the compact reflects Boyer's Basic School model[7], which the school has recently implemented. The compact is premised on Kelly's (Basic School) vision statement, which parents and staff on the school site council drafted in the spring of 1995. This vision statement is included in the introduction to the compact. In addition, parent and staff responsibilities are framed within the four Basic School priorities: (1) the school as a community; (2) a curriculum with coherence; (3) a climate for learning; and (4) a commitment to character.

> *"The compact ties in to our mission statement—it fits our belief statements. It tells me that the development of our strategic plan and compact is on target with what people wanted."*
>
> Principal, Jackson Preparatory Magnet

At Roosevelt the compact is included in the school's Campus Improvement Plan, a state-mandated strategic planning document that focuses on strategies for addressing and evaluating school priorities in many areas, including parent and community involvement. Thus, Roosevelt's strategies for improvement in this area—including offering classes and workshops for parents and improving home-school communication—appear in the compact.

[7] The Basic School Model was developed by Ernest Boyer of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The Basic School Network, a network of schools across the country implementing the model, is a partnership of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the Ewing and Marion Kauffman Foundation, and the American College of Testing.

Sherwood Heights Elementary:
Attention to Process

The compact facilitator at Sherwood Heights Elementary continually emphasized that it is the process, not the finished product, that is the most important ingredient in developing a compact. To insure that all stakeholders could participate, Sherwood Heights allowed each group to write and select their own compact responsibilities. Parents drafted their section over the course of three meetings, while teachers and students drafted responsibilities during the school day. Each group worked independently of the others. To begin this process, parents and teachers both participated in training on high standards and how they relate to curriculum and assessment in the district.

About 25 parents attended the first parent meeting, during which they broke into small groups to brainstorm ideas for compact responsibilities. Three groups generated 53 suggestions addressing five areas: (1) parent-child relationships; (2) reading; (3) cultural events; (4) homework; and (5) parent-teacher relationships. In compiling these ideas, the facilitator and other teachers on the compact committee were careful to honor the parents' language. At the second parent meeting, the suggestions were displayed throughout the room. Each parent was given 20 stickers and asked to vote on the responsibilities they believed were most important. After the meeting, the votes were tallied, and the 18 most popular appeared on the compact.

To solicit input from teachers, the entire staff submitted a list of responsibilities they considered important for student learning. Suggestions were compiled and voted on, and 12 of the 18 possible responsibilities were selected for inclusion in the compact. To solicit input from students, the guidance counselor visited every classroom in the school and asked children to write or draw ways that they could be better students. The children came up with 16 responsibilities and all were included in the compact. As with parents, children's language was honored. The compact facilitator, a literacy specialist/Title I teacher, compiled the responsibilities developed by all three stakeholder groups to create the compact.

Attention to the needs and interests of families in the school and local community. The five schools crafted their compacts specifically to meet the needs and interests of the families in their communities. At Roosevelt, for example, compact development drew on findings from the Annual Community Walk for Success, where teachers, other school staff, and parents walk door-to-door to more than 100 households to find out families' perspectives on the school and what courses, workshops, and support services they would like the school to offer. At Kelly Elementary, the compact developers took the local context and parent needs into account when they decided that parents should not be asked to sign the compact. Compact developers realized that this might undermine the growing sense of trust and partnership between parents and teachers in this low-income community where the

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relationship between community members and the schools was traditionally negative and confrontational.

Jackson's compact includes a statement about non-violent conflict resolution, which generated lengthy discussions among parents developing the compact. Many Jackson parents believe that their children should be allowed to defend themselves physically, if need be. According to the principal, however, "[Parents, students, and staff] all came to consensus. Everyone wanted this, it was not handed down to them. It was the first time we all explicitly committed to a policy of non-violence. Some parents tell their kids to fight back, but that doesn't fit with our compact, our philosophy."

Involvement of parents and staff in each stage of the process, from start-up to review and evaluation. Each school visited involved both parents and teachers in each stage of the compact development process. At Jackson Preparatory Magnet, for example, both parents and teachers developed the compact through the Transformers Committee, the school's vehicle for including parents in governance and decisionmaking and for fulfilling Title I parent involvement requirements. In addition, both parents and teachers attended roundtable discussions to plan for compact implementation. Jackson parents and staff also took part in focus groups to evaluate the compact. Similarly, eight teachers and 25-35 parents attended three compact development meetings at Sherwood Heights to both develop the compact as well as plans to implement and evaluate it. Two schools—Kelly and Sherwood—also sought the input of students in compact development.

> *"The process is the real strength of the compact. To get parents and teachers to sit down and discuss issues gives parents a sense of voice and forces them to think about their responsibilities."*
>
> Parent, Sherwood Heights Elementary

Input and feedback from a larger constituency of stakeholders. All schools visited sought input and feedback from a larger audience of parents, community members, and educators than those directly involved in drafting the compact. At Roosevelt, for example, information gleaned from parents and community members through the Walk for Success was used to develop the compact. Similarly, at Jackson feedback on the draft compact was solicited from all parents at the spring 1996 parent-teacher conferences (prior to compact implementation in the fall of 1997). At Kelly and Bemiss Elementary Schools, the full school staff helped develop the compact through brainstorming sessions held early in the compact development process. At four of the five schools—Bemiss, Jackson, Kelly, and Roosevelt—the compact was reviewed prior to implementation by a school site council comprised of parents, staff, and community members. At Bemiss the compact was formally adopted by the full staff using a consensus ballot.

Use of model compacts as a resource but not a shortcut. Each of the schools visited began the compact development process by examining sample compacts from other schools. At Kelly Elementary, for example, the Title I coordinator assembled sample compacts provided by RMC Research Corporation and from other Basic School Network schools across the country as a starting point for parent and staff brainstorming efforts. Similarly, at Jackson Preparatory Magnet the compact development committee drew on samples provided by the state department of education, the school district, and the federally supported technical assistance center then serving the St. Paul area. At each school, stakeholders stressed that these samples served as a useful starting point for deliberations on compact content and format, rather than as a way to circumvent a comprehensive compact development process.

Stakeholders in the five schools we visited created compacts using common strategies that resulted in compacts they hoped would improve student learning. The next challenge is to put a compact to good use.

Using the Compact to Help Children Achieve High Standards

To implement a compact successfully, schools must introduce it to stakeholders, build stakeholder support for the compact, and maintain the initiative by assisting stakeholders in fulfilling their responsibilities. Each school we visited demonstrates attention to using the compact in these ways by implementing innovative activities and programs or by taking advantage of successful partnership activities already in place. Stakeholders across the five schools, however, said that it is difficult to maintain active support and recognition for the compacts after their initial introduction to the school community. Over time, discussions and activities specifically focused on the compact become less visible and, at times, make its impact questionable.

Finding #3	**One measure of the success of compacts is whether and how they are used. The five schools are trying varied strategies to keep the compact visible and on the agenda, but this is a difficult challenge for stakeholders.**

Launching the compact. The first step in launching a compact is to introduce it to stakeholders. All five of the schools visited did this at the beginning of the year by presenting it to parents at a fall Open House/PTO event or at the first parent-teacher-student conferences of the school year. Each school translated the compact into other languages for non-English speakers and/or provided translators to answer questions. For example, Roosevelt High School launched its compact

by introducing it to parents at the first PTO meeting of the year. It was also sent home with each student, accompanied by a letter from the principal explaining the compact's purpose. Jackson Preparatory Magnet scheduled an additional conference at the beginning of the school year solely to introduce and explain the compact to each individual family. At Clinton Kelly, all teachers introduced the compact to parents at the fall 1996 conferences (which students were encouraged to attend) and provided parents with a form on which they could submit comments.

Jackson Preparatory Magnet
Welcome Back to School Day Launches the Compact

To ensure that all stakeholders understand the purpose of the compact and their responsibilities, parents and staff at Jackson Magnet decided to host a Welcome Back to School Day in August 1996, a week before school opened. In preparation for Welcome Back to School Day, teachers wrote personal "welcome back" letters and decorated their classrooms and school hallways. On the day itself, support staff offered 15-minute compact orientations every hour so that families could become familiar with the document before meeting with teachers. During parent-teacher-student conferences, teachers met their new students and their parents and shared their expectations for the year, linking them explicitly to the compact. Parents introduced their children and described their hopes and concerns for the year. Students talked about their summers and asked questions. All three stakeholders then signed the compact, which was printed in triplicate; parents, teachers, and students each kept a copy.

Jackson's parent educator estimates that 60 percent of the school's parents attended Back to School Day and signed compacts. During fall conferences and at other face-to-face meetings, teachers signed compacts with most of the remaining parents. By the end of the school year, the proportion of Jackson students whose parents had signed a compact (a number that was tracked on a large thermometer graph in the school's lobby) topped 90 percent.

The legislation does not require stakeholders to sign compacts. During the introduction process, only two of the schools asked for signatures on the compact; approximately 63 percent of Bemiss stakeholders and over 90 percent of Jackson stakeholders signed it by the end of 1996-97 school year. Even so, some parents are reluctant to sign compacts. Sherwood Heights is compiling parent comments on the compact to decide whether to ask stakeholders for signatures. At Clinton Kelly, the staff decided that no one should be required to sign because perceived legalities might undermine the growing trust and partnership between parents and teachers. School staff at Roosevelt shared this concern and do not ask stakeholders to sign the compact.

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> *"When there's too much focus on what you signed, it becomes very bureaucratic.... Many of our parents are on welfare—they've signed a lot of things for the government. This is just another thing."*
>
> Parent Educator, Jackson Preparatory Magnet

Building support for the compact. For a school-parent compact to be successful, schools must continually work to involve all stakeholders in its implementation. One way to accomplish this is to link the compact to action so its effects are visible to teachers, parents, and students. Across the schools we visited, many stakeholders report increasing support for the compact by referring to it during parent-teacher-student conferences throughout the school year. Jackson's principal and teachers said they often use the compact in conferences with students at school, and several students reported this was an effective approach to improving student discipline. Well-behaved Jackson students received gold "I'm keeping my compact" stickers to advertise their continued support for the pledges they made.

Unlike the other schools in this study, Sherwood Heights Elementary is gearing up for its first full year of compact implementation. One way the Compact Committee is trying to expand its base of support is by merging the PTO and Compact meetings to encourage higher attendance. In the past, PTO meetings have generated little parent interest. However, Sherwood's three compact meetings were well attended, and the facilitator and PTO president think this merger will benefit both groups with increased support. Additionally, Sherwood Heights hopes to keep the compact a priority by designing a compact newsletter for periodic distribution to parents during the 1997-98 school year. The newsletter will keep parents abreast of the compact's effect on the school, remind them of their responsibilities, and inform them of upcoming school events and activities.

A group of parents interviewed at Roosevelt hope to make more parents aware of their compact in the upcoming school year and emphasize its importance in helping children achieve success in school by distributing the compact during the school's annual Walk For Success.

Building Stakeholder Capacity:
The Parent Educational Assistants Program at Bemiss Elementary

The Parent Educational Assistants (PEA) Program at Bemiss Elementary involves parents in school improvement efforts by training them to serve as reading and math tutors both in the school and in their own homes. The program, funded through Title I, began during the 1995-96 school year. PEAs receive a stipend and at least 12 hours of training each quarter from Title I instructional facilitators, in return for agreeing to tutor children individually in the classroom for four hours a week. In order to strengthen parents' skills as their children's first teachers, PEAs are trained to tutor children in the same grade level as their own children. Parents may participate in the program for up to two years.

The PEA program is administered by the Title I-funded Family Involvement Liaison, who also serves as the Family Learning Center Coordinator. Currently 18 PEAs work at Bemiss; 37 parents have gone through PEA training since the program began. The program has helped both parents and students. Twelve former PEAs have obtained employment or are now enrolled in a GED program or college. Two PEAs are members of the Citizen Advisory Committee for the district, and one PEA sits on the District Title I Advisory Board. All PEAs surveyed as part of the Title I schoolwide program review in March of 1997 agreed that their participation in the program has increased their ability to assist their children with learning and has increased their awareness of the school's learning expectations. The review also found that the five children of returning PEAs in grades 4-6 scored "proficient" on the baseline Scored Retell test (a test of reading proficiency) in the fall of 1996.

As a next step in the program's evolution, two second-year PEAs offered a series of three computer skills workshops for other parents in the Family Learning Center in May and June of 1997. The administration is encouraging the PEAs to take a leadership role in the school's parent involvement efforts because they believe that the parent-to-parent connection is the most powerful catalyst for increased involvement.

Maintaining the initiative. To keep a school-parent compact visible, schools must support its implementation with resources designed to build the capacity of stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and students, to meet their responsibilities. All of the schools we visited offer training and workshops designed to arm parents with skills and provide them with information to support student learning. In most cases, the supports offered in the schools were not created specifically in response to a compact, but stakeholders realize their importance for effective compact implementation. For example, to assist Roosevelt High parents in helping their children master the skills necessary to do well on the TAAS, the school provided evening classes in the fall of 1995 for parents of all sophomores and seniors who had not yet passed. Parents were told how the TAAS affects their children's academic future and were given small group lessons on TAAS reading and math skills as well as sample test

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items. Other classes for parents have focused on adult literacy, computer literacy, English as a Second Language, and parenting skills.

At Jackson, the principal hopes to keep the compact visible by tying it to staff development. To help implement the compact's provisions regarding non-violence, Jackson hired a consultant from the Wilder Foundation (a local foundation) to train a group of parents and teachers. In one workshop this year, the school focused on its conflict resolution curriculum and school staff explored how they resolve conflicts among themselves. The plan is to develop a more extensive training program on conflict resolution for the next school year. The parent educator is also looking at offering a parent education course on conflict resolution. These efforts to keep the Jackson compact visible also serve to help students deal with the pressing social issue of violence.

In all five of the case study sites, most of the capacity building focuses on parents and school staff. However, in addition to providing educational opportunities for parents (see below), Clinton Kelly Elementary is also working with students to reinforce their responsibilities. Through the Commitment to Character priority, the school stresses one "core virtue" each month, including key responsibilities noted in the compact, such as responsibility and respect. The themes are stressed through monthly assemblies, posters placed around the school, classroom activities, and "sharing circles" with the child development specialist. Other strategies include the Jackson school "I'm Keeping My Compact" stickers (described earlier in this report) to advertise student support for the compact.

Integrating the compact into the daily life of schools. Although the schools we visited have made great strides in involving parents more actively in the education of their children, each continues to struggle with effectively incorporating the compact into the school's daily life. For example, stakeholders in four of the schools reported that most teachers reviewed the compact at fall parent-teacher-student conferences; however, attention to the compact after that time often seems sporadic. At Bemiss, only one of three teachers interviewed reported using it with parents or students after the beginning of the year. At Jackson, two of the less active parents interviewed had no recollection of the compact until they were prompted. The parents eventually remembered reviewing the compact at the fall parent-teacher conferences but believed it did not affect their behavior. Part of the reason for this may be attributed to the relative infancy of the documents. One principal stated her belief that it takes a minimum of three years before a school reform becomes institutionalized. At four of the schools visited, the compact had only been in place for one year, and at Sherwood Heights, it has yet to see its first full year of implementation.

Additionally, parent involvement in four of the five schools was strong before development of the compact. In light of the many parent programs already in place at these schools, keeping the compact distinctly visible is difficult. For example, at Roosevelt the compact is an attachment to the Campus Improvement Plan (C.I.P.), a document written each year by staff, administrators, and community members detailing school improvement efforts. The stakeholder responsibilities listed on the compact reinforce the school's overall goals for success as stated in the C.I.P. While the parent liaison at Roosevelt and several parents were well versed on the C.I.P., the compact itself was reportedly less familiar to the larger parent body. At Bemiss, the assistant principal referred to the compact as a "summation of what's already happening" in terms of parent involvement and school improvement. Only two of 13 parents interviewed at the school cited effects of the compact, such as "It makes parents feel a little more a part of the school." Several parents at Bemiss and Roosevelt added that many parents were already meeting the responsibilities listed on the compact before it was written, therefore its impact is not readily distinguished from that of other parent involvement efforts.

> *"The compact is just a piece of paper—people will act how they're going to act.... The compact itself won't change anything. You need parent involvement activities. It's because of [the principal's] commitment to the parents that the school is how it is ..."*
>
> Parent, Bemiss Elementary School

Although each school is experiencing some difficulty in maintaining momentum for their compact, stakeholders and principals at all five schools emphasize the compact's evolutionary nature and plan to continue to build on the first year's work to make the compact a success. The principal at Jackson, for example, said the 1996-97 school year was spent taking the initial steps toward implementation. Next year, the school will offer additional assistance to stakeholders in fulfilling their responsibilities and more closely focus on the compact's impact in the classroom. At Clinton Kelly, the principal admits that the compact needs more work and emphasizes that it is no "stone tablet." Jackson, Roosevelt, Clinton Kelly, and Bemiss all plan to reintroduce the compact to stakeholders in Fall 1997.

> *"Everybody knows it's not where we want to be yet, ...[the compact] will always be changing."*
>
> Principal, Clinton Kelly Elementary School

Evaluating and Strengthening the Compact

Once a compact is developed and implemented, stakeholders will want to know whether the compact is working and how it can be improved, or strengthened. Evaluating and strengthening the compact sends a message to parents, school staff, and interested community members that the school is serious about its compact.

Finding #4	**Stakeholders across the case study schools view their compacts as a "work in progress" and plan for early and regular evaluation.**

Compacts in the case study schools have been implemented for no more than one year. Stakeholders across all of the schools view the compact as a work in progress and plan to evaluate their compacts regularly to improve or strengthen them. Even though the compacts are new in these schools, stakeholders in four of the five schools have conducted some type of evaluation already. They have used both more formal strategies such as surveys or focus group interviews as well as informal discussions with stakeholders.

> *"It is incumbent upon us to use the document to make the school better. We have yet to see if it will really make a difference..."*
>
> Sherwood Heights parent

Use of specific indicators. At two of the schools, Sherwood Heights and Roosevelt, in addition to gathering verbal feedback from parents and school staff, compact developers have targeted specific indicators of success, and will collect this information either through surveys or from existing databases such as attendance logs. Parents and staff at Sherwood Heights received training focused on benchmarks for success and strategies for reviewing and revising the compact from a district-trained facilitator. Compact developers at Sherwood have since decided on several indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of the compact. These include measures of student achievement (results from the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and the Maine Educational Assessment—a statewide test administered annually to all fourth graders) as well as attendance logs from monthly meetings, parent-teacher conferences, family library nights, and school volunteer activities to monitor how parents are fulfilling their compact responsibilities. The principal also plans to develop surveys for students, staff, and parents during the 1997-98 school year.

Gathering Data from Many Stakeholders to Evaluate the School-Parent Compact

At Roosevelt High, the district Title I director as well as Roosevelt's principal, parent liaison, and a teacher will all take part in evaluating the compact with the goal of finding out what worked, what did not work, and what are the positive results they should expect to see from the compact. Plans to evaluate the compact include:

- The district Title I director will work with Roosevelt's principal to incorporate relevant measures of success into the evaluation. For example, Roosevelt's compact challenges parents to see that their children attend school daily and arrive on time. Appropriate measures of how successfully parents fulfill these responsibilities include student attendance and tardiness data.
- The principal used part of the May staff development session to gather staff input on how to improve the compact.
- The parent liaison met with 25-30 parents in April to discuss evaluating the compact (as well as the parent involvement policy), and they decided to include a survey for parents in the final mailing of the 1996-97 school year. The survey asks whether respondents think each compact responsibility was fulfilled. Parents attending the year's final school-based decision making meeting also discussed the compact and how they think it should be revised.
- A teacher who has been actively involved in the Alliance Schools Initiative and its focus on parent involvement has drafted a school staff survey to assess whether staff are fulfilling their compact responsibilities.

This information will be compiled in early fall 1997.

Evaluations using open-ended, exploratory discussions. The principals at both Kelly and Bemiss viewed the compacts as too new to conduct a formal evaluation at this point. At Kelly, for example, a cover letter from the principal requested parent feedback on the compact when it was first distributed, and the compact has been recently modified as staff collected ideas from fourth and fifth grade students through the student council. Parents participating in the Family Stories project have discussed the need to revise the parent responsibilities to reflect one of Boyer's Basic School priorities. In the future, the compact will also be reviewed and discussed at meetings each year by parents, the full staff, and the Site Council.

In the spring of 1996, Jackson Prep held a series of focus groups to discuss the success of the school program across several areas including partnerships with parents and the compact. Focus groups are designed to explore topics and generate discussion among several participants, and may be especially useful in gauging the reaction to a new school improvement or reform activity. Specifically, focus group participants at Jackson discussed use of the compact at Welcome Back to School Day and

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parent-teacher conferences. The goal of these focus groups, one of which was conducted in the Hmong language, is for participants to recommend new or revised strategies for supporting improved student achievement. The Transformers Committee will review the findings from the focus groups and revise the school plan and compact accordingly.

Problem of evaluating the effectiveness of the compact itself as separate from other partnership activities and reforms. While stakeholders across the schools we visited agree that evaluating the compacts is important to their successful implementation as well as to using the compact to support student learning, all agree on the difficulty of tying particular measures of success directly to the compacts. At Bemiss, for example, the principal thinks it will be difficult if not impossible to isolate the effects of the compact from those of other ongoing parent involvement efforts. He stressed that creating a compact will not by itself result in the successful levels of parent involvement evident at Bemiss. The assistant principal agreed, noting that "the compact is a summation of what's already happening in terms of parent involvement and school improvement..." The dean of instruction and other school staff at Roosevelt High echoed this belief, saying that evaluating the effects of the compact is in essence evaluating the effects of the broader parent and community involvement efforts at the school.

Conclusion

Experience in a small sample of Title I schools with strong support for school-family partnerships points to several suggested guidelines for creating a promising school-parent compact, using the compact to help all children achieve high standards, and evaluating and strengthening a compact.

To create a promising compact:

- **Support and build on the compact with a comprehensive partnership between schools and families**. While it is possible for a school to have a successful partnership with parents without a school-parent compact, a compact will probably not have much effect on student learning unless it is one part of a comprehensive partnership between schools and families. In addition to creating a compact for learning, schools need to maintain an open-door policy toward parents and offer them many opportunities to support children's learning at school and at home.

- **Pay close attention to process**. To create a compact that stakeholders will buy into, include parents, teachers and other school staff, and students (if appropriate) in the

development process. Focus on the ultimate goal of the compact, which is to help all children achieve high standards. Discuss the school's goals and expectations for student learning, as well as the school's overall philosophy on teaching and learning and existing school reform efforts as part of determining each stakeholder group's responsibilities. Assign responsibilities that build on the local community's needs and interests. Involve all stakeholder groups in each stage of the process, from start-up to review and evaluation, and gather input and feedback from a larger audience of parents, community members, and educators than those directly involved in drafting the compact. Finally, examining models is useful as a starting point, but the compact should be tailored to the school.

- **Gear the content toward helping all students meet high standards**. Compacts should meet the Title I requirements, although they do not need to mimic the language of the law. In fact, compacts created by parents, teachers, and students will reflect their own language and ideas about how to increase student achievement.

To use the compact to help children achieve high standards:

- **Take advantage of varied ways to introduce the compact to as many families as possible, including special open house or PTO events, sending the compact home with all students, and introducing the compact at parent-teacher-student conferences**. If families speak languages other than English, translate the compact into the other languages spoken and, if possible, have someone available who can communicate with non-English speakers about the purpose of the compact. Build support for the compact throughout the entire school year by referring to it as often as possible at conferences, PTO meetings, in newsletters, and at special events. Maintain the initiative generated by the compact by arming stakeholders with training and workshops in support of student learning.

To evaluate and strengthen the compact:

- **Consider the compact to be a "work in progress" that can always be improved. Think broadly about evaluation and use multiple measures of success.** If the compact is part of a comprehensive program of partnership, it will be difficult to measure its impact relative to other partnership activities and supports. However, some possible measures of impact include changes in knowledge on the part of parents and educators about the existence of the compact and its purpose as well as about helping all children achieve to high standards, levels of parent participation in school-related activities, and changes in student achievement.

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APPENDIX:

Brief Profiles of the Five Case Study Schools

Bemiss Elementary School
Spokane, Washington

Partnerships with Parents to Raise Student Achievement

Bemiss Elementary serves a mobile population of 561 students in grades K-6. Although the student population is predominantly white, many children are recent immigrants from Russia or the Ukraine. Eighty-six percent of students are eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch. Bemiss has been engaged in an intensive reform effort since the 1992-93 school year, when the district reported that the school had the lowest fourth grade CTBS scores in the district. Since then, school staff and the site council have developed a school mission statement and a set of beliefs and goals to guide reform efforts. These documents also serve as the basis of Bemiss' three-year Title I schoolwide program plan, developed with the input of parents, community members, local businesses, school staff, and students during the 1994-95 school year. Recent reforms include multi-age classrooms and "looping" (i.e., teachers moving up a grade level with their students) to help combat the instability that pervades many of the students' lives, and establishment of the Parent Educational Assistants program, which trains parents to serve as reading and math tutors in the classroom.

Creating the compact. Under the direction of the Schoolwide Implementation Team (a body of 15 staff who oversee the schoolwide program plan implementation), compact development at Bemiss began during a half-day of professional development at the beginning of the 1996-97 school year. Staff broke into small groups to examine the sample compacts and compact development guidelines provided by the district Title I coordinator. They also discussed responsibilities that would complement their schoolwide plan, wording that would make sense to students and parents, and different formats for presenting each stakeholder's responsibilities. The assistant principal and a small group of staff took the lead in compiling the ideas produced from the brainstorming session.

The draft compact was then shared with approximately 20 Parent Educational Assistants for input at one of their weekly skill-building workshops. The revised draft compact was reviewed by the full staff at a regular staff meeting. After additional revisions, the compact was approved and formally adopted by the full staff using a consensus ballot. The compact was also reviewed and approved by the school site council (a body chaired by and comprised predominantly of parents).

Using the compact. The compact was translated into Russian and Hmong and distributed at the fall parent-teacher conferences in November 1996. Parents were encouraged to bring their children with them to the conferences. If students could not attend, parents were asked to take the compact home and discuss it with their child before signing. Translators answered questions at the conferences for parents that did not speak English.

In the future, Bemiss plans to use the compact as a tool to encourage parent involvement with the parents of their high risk students and to encourage parents to take advantage of the many extended learning opportunities that the school offers, such as the new summer tutoring and enrichment program. The principal reports that teachers and administrators are still exploring strategies for integrating the compact into ongoing school activities to maximize its effect.

Building stakeholder capacity. Bemiss provides many opportunities for parents to strengthen their skills as their children's first teachers. These opportunities include:

- The Parent Educational Assistants (PEA) Program, which trains parents to serve as reading and math tutors both in the classroom and in their own homes. PEAs receive a stipend and at least 12 hours of training each quarter from the Title I instructional facilitators, in return for agreeing to tutor children individually in the classroom for four hours a week. In order to strengthen parents' skills as their children's first teachers, the PEAs are trained to tutor children in the same grade level as their own children.

- The Family Learning Center, which provides parenting and life skills workshops and offers a wide array of learning games, activities, books, and resources that parents can borrow for use with their children at home. The center is staffed by a full-time Family Involvement Liaison.

- A parent volunteer program administered by a full-time Home-School Liaison who also coordinates parent, family, and community activities.

- The Parent Connections Action Team, comprised of staff and parents, which meets monthly to discuss strategies for building home-school linkages.

The school also provides opportunities for staff to strengthen their skills in helping children to meet high standards through partnerships with parents. When it became a schoolwide project, Bemiss decided to use Title I funds to hire four instructional facilitators to provide ongoing, site-based professional development for school staff. Four times a year these instructional facilitators meet with the teachers who have PEAs to provide them with information on the program and strategies for working with parents in the classroom. Parents report that the administration sets the tone for a welcoming school environment that is echoed by teachers.

The compact as a work in progress: supporting continuous improvement. When the compact was being developed, the Schoolwide Implementation Team discussed the need to revisit the compact annually. The team plans to solicit feedback on the compact from parents and staff before the compact is distributed at the fall conferences again next year. Because of the mobility of the families served by Bemiss, the principal believes that it is very important to revisit the compact and seek parent input at the beginning of each school year. Next year the compact will also be included as a specific topic in the annual schoolwide program evaluation, which reviews school progress in a number of areas including student learning in reading and math as well as parent involvement.

Evidence of success. Stakeholders offered the following as evidence that the Bemiss program of partnership, including its compact, is successfully supporting student learning:

- Parent participation on the School Site Council has increased from 5 parents when it began during the 1993-94 school year, to 35 parents.

- During 1996-97 roughly 30 parents regularly volunteered in the classroom compared with 15 during 1995-96.

- As of March 1997, parent and community volunteers had donated over 1,100 hours to Bemiss students since the beginning of the school year.

- PEAs are increasingly involved in school and district decision-making. Twenty PEAs participated in the development of the school-parent compact and 3 PEAs now sit on the district-level Citizen's Advisory Committee or the Title I Advisory Board.

- Student achievement on the CTBS (fourth graders) increased from the 19th percentile in 1991-92 to the 41st percentile in 1995-96.

- Twelve former PEAs have obtained employment or are now enrolled in a GED program or in college.

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Bemiss Elementary School Parent-Student-Teacher Compact 1996-7

It is the mission of Bemiss Elementary School, in partnership with parents and community, to empower each child to achieve his, her fullest potential to become a lifelong learner and responsible citizen. We are committed to foster high expectations and promote positive attitudes to achieve equity and excellence in a safe and nurturing environment.

Community, Parents, Schools, and Students
Partners in Each Child's Education
Success for All

As a Teacher, I, _____ will strive to

- *believe that each child can learn;*
- *respect and value the uniqueness of each child and his or her family;*
- *provide an environment that promotes active learning;*
- *enforce the Bemiss "Bees" in the classroom and throughout the school in a fair and consistent manner;*
- *assist each child in achieving the essential academic learning requirements;*
- *document ongoing assessment of each child's academic progress;*
- *maintain open lines of communication with students and parents;*
- *seek ways to involve parents in the school program; and*
- *demonstrate professional behavior and a positive attitude.*

As a Parent/Guardian I, _____ will strive to

- *believe my child can learn;*
- *show respect and support for my child, the staff, and the school;*
- *see that my child attends school regularly and is on time;*
- *provide a quiet place for my child to study at home;*
- *encourage my child to complete all homework assignments;*
- *attend parent-teacher conferences;*
- *support the school in developing positive behaviors in my child;*
- *talk with my child about his or her school activities each day; and*
- *encourage my child to read at home and apply all their learning to daily life.*

As a Student I, _____ will strive to

- *believe that I can learn;*
- *show respect for myself, my school, and other people;*
- *always try to do my best in my work and my behavior;*
- *work cooperatively with students and staff;*
- *obey the Bemiss "Bees" in the classroom and throughout the school; and*
- *come to school prepared with my homework and supplies.*

As Members of the Bemiss Educational Community, Together We Are Partners In Your Child's Education As We Uphold The Intent Of This Compact

As Principal I, _____ represent all Bemiss School staff in affirming this contract.

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Jackson Preparatory Magnet School
St. Paul, Minnesota

Using the School-Parent Compact to Promote Shared Values

Located in St. Paul's poorest neighborhood, Jackson Preparatory Magnet School serves a diverse group of students and emphasizes the development of caring relationships, respect for cultural diversity, and provision of a strong basic academic program. Jackson's school-parent compact has been a vehicle for bringing parents, teachers, and students together to discuss their expectations for each other, the values they agree to hold in common, and their commitment to working in partnership on behalf of students.

Jackson is a Title I schoolwide program that enrolls 430 students in grades K-6. Thirty-nine percent of the students are white, 34 percent are Asian (mostly Hmong), 19 percent are African-American, 6 percent are Hispanic, and 2 percent are Native American. Eighty-three percent of the students receive free- or reduced-price lunches. The school's magnet program is designed to attract middle-class/white families from outside the neighborhood; about 30 percent of the students attending the school are "magnet" students.

Creating the compact. Jackson's Family/School Partnership Committee, more commonly known as the Transformers, played the lead role in the development of the school-family compact. Made up of nine parents and six school staff members (including the school's principal and parent educator), the Transformers committee began when a team of parents and staff attended training provided by Minnesota's Department of Children, Families and Learning. The Transformers committee has now become the school's vehicle for including parents in governance and decision-making and for fulfilling the parent involvement requirements of Title I.

From the beginning, the Transformers decided that the process of developing the compact should include as many parents, students, and school staff as possible. A member of the committee said, "The problem with doing it by committee is that eight people get overly invested in the work. Then they present it and expect implementation. Without a good process, no one buys in." To jump start the drafting process in the winter of 1996, three parents and two staff members reviewed examples of existing compacts drawn from materials on parent involvement disseminated by the Minnesota state department of education, the St. Paul school district, and the federally supported technical assistance center then serving St. Paul. From these examples, they selected 40 possible statements for review by large groups of parents, staff, and students.

In two separate evening events held in spring 1996, 120 staff, parents, and students met to discuss possible statements of parent, teacher, and student responsibility and agree on those they would include in the compact. Using a card-sort activity designed to facilitate consensus-building by large numbers of stakeholders, parents, staff, and students met in small groups facilitated by members of the Transformers committee to discuss belief statements, refine language, and vote on those statements that they believed were most important. Using the input from these Design a Compact activities, the Transformers drafted a compact. They presented the draft compact to staff at a faculty meeting and displayed it in the parent educator's office during spring conferences for further review and comment.

Implementing the compact. Once the compact was revised and adopted, a group of Jackson parents and staff met to decide on an implementation strategy. As a result of these discussions, the school decided to hold a Welcome Back to School Day a week before school opened to introduce the compact to parents and students and to have them signed in face-to-face parent-teacher-student conferences.

In preparation for Welcome Back to School Day in August 1996, teachers wrote personal "welcome back" letters and decorated their classrooms and school hallways. On the day itself, support staff offered 15-minute compact orientations every hour so that families could become familiar with the document before meeting with teachers. In the gym, families played board games and enjoyed refreshments while they waited between appointments with teachers. During parent-teacher-student conferences, teachers met their new students and their parents and shared their expectations for the year, linking them explicitly to the compact. Parents introduced their children and described their hopes and concerns for the year. Students talked about their summers and asked questions. All three stakeholders then signed the compact, which was printed in triplicate. Once the compact was signed, parents, teachers, and students each kept a copy. The school ensured that non-English-speaking parents could participate fully in the day by translating the compacts into Spanish and Hmong, offering compact orientation sessions in three languages, and providing interpreters for parent-teacher-student conferences.

Jackson's parent educator estimates that 60 percent of the school's parents attended Back to School Day and signed compacts. During fall conferences and at other face-to-face meetings, teachers signed compacts with most of the remaining parents. By the end of the school year, the proportion of Jackson students whose parents had signed a compact (a number that was tracked on a large thermometer graph in the school's lobby) topped 90 percent.

Specific activities to support implementation of the compact, beyond the initial signing by parents, teachers, and students, have been somewhat less visible. Most teachers reviewed the compact with parents and students in fall conferences, and parents and students received gold "I'm keeping my compact" stickers to advertise their continued support for the pledges they had made. Both teachers and the principal report that they have used the compact in conferences with students, reminding them that they signed a pledge to work hard or resolve conflicts non-violently, and using that pledge as a means of holding students accountable. Several students interviewed said that this was an effective approach to student discipline.

Although the pledge to resolve conflicts non-violently has been one of the only provisions in the compact without universal support from parents (because some parents believe that their children should be allowed to defend themselves physically if need be), the principal maintains that the compact plays an important role in promoting the values of the school community on this issue in particular. As a public statement, he argues, "The compact reflects the concerns that exist in school. It provides a common base of language to work off. In the compact, it formally said that hitting is not an okay way to deal with things." Using the compact as a springboard, the principal has continued to enforce a policy of non-violence in disciplining students and has provided staff training on conflict resolution and peer mediation.

Some school staff are skeptical about the implementation of the compact, arguing that it has proved unenforceable because there are no consequences if parents or students do not live up to what they promise. Both the parent educator and the principal, however, argue that it is a mistake to think of

the compact as a legal document that can be used to regulate the behavior of parents or others. The parent educator argues that the value of the document lies elsewhere: "Any time I can get a teacher and a parent to meet about something other than a single student I've built partnership. If the compact is about agreeing on what is important in a school, talking about the agreement, opening the year with a positive contact with the teacher, then it has value."

Building stakeholder capacity. Jackson engages in a wide range of activities to build partnerships with parents, enhance parents' capacity to support the education of their children, and engage parents in school governance.

- A licensed parent educator works at Jackson three and a half days a week, spearheading the school's outreach to parents, designing and implementing parent education programs, and acting as an advocate for individual parents as necessary.

- The Head Start Transition project makes four home visits each year to 120 families. Transition project staff help connect families with teachers and other school staff, encourage families to volunteer or get involved in other ways, and connect families with needed services. Funding for this project, however, ended with the 1996-97 school year.

- Jackson holds family activity nights almost monthly. Parents and their children participate together in hands-on activities designed to help parents learn how to assist their children academically. Parents and school staff have a chance to interact in an atmosphere that is informal and fun.

- Jackson offers two parenting courses each year. Courses meet one or two times each week for eight to ten weeks. Course topics include English as a Second Language, child discipline, and other family issues. Approximately 12 parents enroll in each course.

- The Project Soar Reading program engages parents in reading to their children at home. Students earn 2 points for bringing a note from home saying that they have read a book to an adult there; students earning 10 points or more become eligible for prizes donated by parents and community members.

- The Hmong parents group meets monthly with Jackson's principal to voice concerns, ask questions, and listen to speakers. A member of the Transformers committee serves as a liaison to the Hmong group.

- The Transformers committee involves parents in school governance and decision-making through development and/or approval of the Title I schoolwide plan, the school's strategic plan, and plans for parent involvement activities. The Transformers committee recruits and trains new members each year so that 50 percent of the parent members turn over annually.

The compact as a work in progress: Supporting continuous improvement. In spring 1996, Jackson held a series of focus groups to evaluate the success of the compact and recommend new or revised strategies for compact implementation. At the time of our visit, the Transformers committee planned to review the results of these focus group discussions as it planned activities for the coming

school year; the committee had already decided to hold another Welcome Back to School Day to present the compact to parents. Jackson's principal reported that the school had no plans to revise the wording of the compact or make other changes.

Jackson has no plans in place to evaluate the effects of the school-family compact on school safety issues, including the number of fights on the school playground and the number of detentions and suspensions.

Evidence of success. The parents of students enrolled at Jackson Preparatory Magnet participate in a variety of school-sponsored activities to support student learning:

- About 60 parents and students attended the "Design A Compact" activities.
- Approximately seven parents attended the round table discussions on compact implementation.
- Sixty to 150 parents attend the Jackson activity nights.
- Approximately 12 parents are enrolled in each eight week parenting course.
- Approximately 70 parents were recognized for volunteerism at parent appreciation night.
- Approximately 60 percent of Jackson parents attended the "Welcome Back To School Day" conferences and signed compacts. Other parents signed compacts at fall conferences or at other meeting. Current percentage of parents who have signed is more than 90 percent.
- Approximately 30 parents attend the monthly parent meetings conducted in Hmong.

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"Where Thought is Taught and Parents are Always Welcome"

Jackson School Compact

We, the Jackson School community , establish this compact in order to foster the core values of honesty, integrity, respect, trust and responsibility and to support the success of Jackson students.

As a Parent/Caregiver I pledge to:

- Maintain and foster high standards of academic achievement and positive behavior.
- Find out how my child is doing by attending conferences, looking at my child's schoolwork, or calling the school.
- Spend time each day with my child reading, writing, listening, or just talking.
- Respect, love, and encourage my child's growth and ideas.
- Help my child to resolve conflicts in positive, non-violent ways.

Parent/Caregiver signature_____

As a Jackson School Staff Member I pledge to:

- Maintain and foster high standards of academic achievement and positive behavior.
- Respectfully and accurately inform parents of their child's progress.
- Have high expectations for myself, students, and other staff.
- Respect the cultural differences of students, their families, and other staff.
- Help children to resolve conflicts in positive, non-violent ways.

Staff signature_____

As a Jackson School Student I pledge to:

Work hard to do my best in class and complete my homework.

- Discuss with my parents what I am learning in school.
- Have a positive attitude towards self, others, school, and learning.
- Respect the cultural differences of other students, their families, and staff.
- Work to resolve conflicts in positive, non-violent ways.

Student signature_____

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Clinton Kelly Elementary School
Portland, Oregon

Involving Parents in Schoolwide Reform

Clinton Kelly Elementary is located in the Lents neighborhood in Portland, a poor neighborhood that suffers from high unemployment and crime rates. It serves 553 students in grades K-5. The student population in primarily white (86 percent) with a large number of language-minority Russian students (15 percent of the total student population). Seventy-one percent of the student population is eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch. Kelly became a schoolwide Title I school in the fall of 1996.

Kelly has been working toward implementing Ernest Boyer's Basic School model since the 1994-95 school year, when the site council attended a workshop led by Boyer in Portland. Both the Title I schoolwide plan and the school-parent compact focus on the four priorities of the Basic School model. These four priorities are: (1) the school as a community; (2) a curriculum with coherence; (3) a climate for learning; and (4) a commitment to character. Four Basic School priority committees comprised primarily of school staff oversee school planning in each of these areas.

Creating the compact. Compact development began at a parent meeting in the fall of 1995. At this meeting, the Title I coordinator explained the purpose of the compact and shared sample compacts that she had received from the district Title I coordinator and other Basic Schools across the country. The approximately 20 parents participating in the meeting broke into four small groups to brainstorm. Although they were encouraged to concentrate on their responsibilities as parents, they also drafted a set of responsibilities for students and teachers.

School staff broke into four groups and drafted their own section on staff responsibilities in the spring of 1996. Substitutes (paid for with Title I funds) provided coverage in their classrooms during this time. Staff members used the sample compacts and the draft of parent responsibilities as a starting point for their deliberations. With Boyer's Basic Schools study sessions fresh in their minds, staff framed their responsibilities around the Basic School priorities. The facilitators from these four groups then came together to combine and prioritize staff responsibilities.

The revised compact was reviewed by the entire staff and by several parents. Parents decided that they liked the format chosen by the staff and revised their responsibilities to fit within the Basic School framework as well. The compact was formally adopted by the School Site Council in the early fall of 1996.

Using the compact. Compacts were translated into Russian and Spanish and distributed at parent-teacher conferences in November of 1996. Parents were encouraged to bring their children with them to the conferences to discuss the compact. Translators were available for parents who did not speak English. Parents were not asked to sign the compact because staff felt that this would be too legalistic and were afraid that it might undermine the growing partnership between parents and teachers. Teachers also reviewed the compact with students in the classroom.

Next year, staff plan to include the compact as a topic of discussion at other school events such as the parent information session on the first day of school and during kindergarten "round-up" in the spring.

Building stakeholder capacity. Kelly provides a number of opportunities for parents to learn new skills that can help them fulfill their compact responsibilities for student learning. These opportunities include:

- The Kelly House, a community center located across the street from the school, which provides parents with an array of needed services, including: (1) assistance with resume writing; (2) clothing appropriate for job interviews; (3) GED, cooking, and sewing classes; and (4) referral information for other social and health services. Kelly House is coordinated by a parent who was a welfare recipient and is now a full-time staff member.

- The Family Stories program, which helps parents to build social networks and enhance their literacy skills. Participating parents and children write and illustrate stories about their family history.

- MegaSkills classes to help parents learn how to enhance their children's confidence, motivation, effort, responsibility, initiative, perseverance, caring, teamwork, common sense, and problem-solving skills.

- Monthly family involvement nights, such as family math or family science night.

- Monthly Basic School priority committee meetings, which provide parents as well as school staff the opportunity to participate in planning to implement the Basic School model.

In addition to these opportunities, teachers are encouraged to reach out to parents and make them feel welcome in the school This year, classroom teachers were asked to call each parent within the first month of school, and to make several positive contacts throughout the year

The compact as a work in progress: supporting continuous improvement. Kelly's principal stresses that the compact is a working document and will be re-evaluated by all stakeholders annually. When the compact was first distributed, a cover note stated that it was "a work in progress" and asked for parent feedback. Since the fall, the compact has been modified slightly, as staff sought the input of fourth and fifth grade students through the student council. The compact is expected to be revised again before it is distributed in the fall of 1997. Parents participating in Family Stories have already discussed the need to revise their section to add a set of responsibilities that address the "commitment to character" priority of the Basic School model. The student council is considering creating a student pledge that students can recite.

Evidence of success. Parents at Clinton Kelly continue to increase their participation in school-related activities that boost their ability to support their children's learning at home as well as at school:

- Participation in the Family Stories project rose from 10 in 1994, its first year, to about 35 currently; the principal reports that these parents' confidence has grown dramatically and that they are more involved in their children's school work.

- Twenty parents participated in the first year of the Mega-Skills project last year; about 30 parents participated during 1996-97.

- Participation in Family Involvement Nights has increased from 6-10 parents when the program began three years ago, to a current average of about 60 parents.

- School council members report that more students complete their homework and follow school rules.

- The principal and Title I coordinator report that school vandalism has declined considerably over the past five to six years.

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Kelly Home/School Compact

Effective schools are a result of families and school staff working together to insure that children are successful in school. A compact is a voluntary agreement between two groups that firmly unites them. You are invited to be involved in a partnership with Kelly Elementary School.

Kelly School Vision Statement

We are a family of learners dedicated to nurturing a strong sense of self among all students, staff, family, and community members.

When we have a strong sense of self—

- We respect ourselves, fellow human beings, and our earth.
- We value our differences and our connections.
- We have the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in and contribute to our community, country, and the family of nations.
- We believe in and have hope for the future.

Student Pledge

I will strive to...

- attend school regularly
- complete assignments and return homework on time to the teacher
- show respect for myself, other people, animals and property
- accept responsibility for my own actions
- make an effort to do my best to learn
- resolve conflicts peacefully
- get the best possible education I can

Family Involvement

Parents and other significant adults are asked to agree to the following commitments as they are involved in assisting the school in insuring a productive school experience for their children.

Parent Pledge

School as a Community:

- To help my child be successful by volunteering at school and/or providing other support to teachers
- To attend school functions and parent-teacher conferences

A Curriculum with Coherence:

- To be involved in the amount and content of my child's TV viewing and radio listening
- To stay aware of what my child is learning and communicate regularly with school staff and with my child
- To assist with homework and read with my children every day

A Climate for Learning:

- To provide adequate rest, food and medical attention so my child is ready to learn
- To help my child get to school on time and attend regularly

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Staff Pledge

School as a Community:

- Communicate and work with families to enhance students' learning
- Respect the cultural differences of students and their families
- Continue efforts to develop professionally

A Curriculum with Coherence:

- Provide curriculum which promotes literacy through the study of literature, math, and the arts
- Explain assignments clearly and provide homework that supports the curriculum
- Encourage students and parents by providing information about student progress

A Climate for Learning:

- Provide a safe, pleasant, and caring atmosphere
- Provide resources to help all children be successful in their school experience

A Commitment to Character:

- Maintain high expectations for myself, students, and other staff
- Assist students in the development of a sense of personal and civic responsibility
- Help students learn to resolve conflicts in an appropriate and positive manner

Roosevelt High School
Dallas, Texas

Focusing on Parents, Teachers, and the Community to Raise Student Achievement

At Roosevelt High, a schoolwide program school, 99 percent of the students are from minority families. The principal estimates that roughly 80 percent of students enrolled are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. In 1992, fewer than one quarter of Roosevelt students met minimum academic standards on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). The Texas Education Agency (TEA) included Roosevelt on its list of low-performing schools, and the Dallas Independent School District was considering whether to close the school.

In 1992, Roosevelt's principal decided to join the statewide Alliance Schools Initiative, which works to develop strong community-based constituencies of parents, teachers, and community leaders as a strategy for substantially increasing student achievement in low-income areas throughout Texas. The initiative is a partnership between the Texas Interfaith Education Fund, whose separate chapters statewide include the Dallas Area Interfaith (DAI), the Texas Industrial Areas Foundation (TIAF) Network, and the TEA. The process of implementing the Alliance approach focuses on working closely with the community to assess family needs and strengths and to develop an action agenda for the school. According to the principal, dean of instruction, and several parents, the school-parent compact complemented the school's effort to involve families in helping all children achieve to higher standards.

Creating the compact. During the summer of 1995, the district Title I director met with Roosevelt's principal, dean of instruction, and parent liaison to explain the Title I requirement for a school-parent compact and its purpose, provide some sample compacts, and discuss a timeframe for developing Roosevelt's compact. The Title I director stressed that Roosevelt's compact should respond to the particular needs of its own students and families.

The compact was written by the dean of instruction during the spring of 1996. To write it, she used several sources that broadly reflect the needs and strengths of students, parents, and other community members. These included:

- The school mission statement (which states that all students will become complex thinkers and lifelong learners).
- Subject area departmental goals (to which every teacher contributes).
- Test scores on the TAAS and student discipline and attendance data.
- Information from the Annual Community Walk for Success, where teachers, other school staff, and parents walk door-to-door (reaching more than 100 households) to find out what families would like to change about the school and what courses, workshops, and support services they would like Roosevelt to offer.

Using the compact. The compact is an appendix (along with the parent involvement policy) to Roosevelt's Campus Improvement Plan (CIP). The CIP is a state-mandated school strategic planning document that focuses on needs, strategies to address them (including staff development), a timeline for addressing them, and a plan to evaluate whether needs are met for every major area of school life (e.g., site-based management, student performance in each subject area, student support services). Because the compact is an integral part of the CIP, it is familiar to both those school staff and parents serving on the CIP planning committee as well as to those who implement the CIP during the year.

Although parents are not required to sign the compact, it was sent home with every student at the beginning of the 1996-97 school year. A letter signed by the principal accompanied the compact to explain its purpose and provide the parent liaison's name and telephone number for those with questions. In addition, the principal explained and distributed the compact at the first PTA meeting of the year. Although it has been translated into Spanish, tutors were available at the meeting to answer questions for parents who do not speak English. Many teachers use the compact at parent-teacher-student conferences. The advanced placement English teacher indicated she uses the compact to enlist parent's help with making sure students work as hard as they can.

Finally, the compact provided a topic for the final staff development session of this school year. Staff evaluated both the compact and the parent involvement policy, information that will prove valuable to next year's CIP planning team.

Building stakeholder capacity. A major thrust of the Alliance Schools Initiative is to implement strategic, targeted training for teachers and administrators and to provide services, education, and training for parents and community leaders as they participate in school reform efforts. The many activities Roosevelt has implemented with this goal in mind help school staff and families in the community develop the skills and confidence they need to take responsibility for educating Roosevelt's students. These activities have included:

- DAI training sessions to teach principals of Alliance schools how to form "core teams" consisting of the principal, teachers, staff, parents, and other community/business leaders. The core teams receive training in conducting house meetings where parents, school staff, and community members share their concerns and develop school reform plans

- DAI training to teach school staff to conduct a Neighborhood Walk for Success as a way to reach out to parents and other residents of the local community. DAI then guides the school staff in assessing the condition of the campus and local community and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of both

- Classes for parents on topics such as helping their children with homework. For example, during the fall of 1995, parents of all sophomores and seniors who had not yet passed the TAAS were invited to an evening class on how the TAAS affects their children's academic future. The class included small group lessons on TAAS reading and math skills as well as sample test items. Other classes for parents have focused on adult literacy, computer literacy, English as a Second Language, and parenting skills

The compact as a work in progress: supporting continuous improvement. The district Title I director as well as Roosevelt's principal, parent liaison, and a teacher will all take part in evaluating the compact with the goal of finding out what worked, what did not work, and what are the positive results they should expect to see from the compact. Plans to evaluate the compact include:

- The district Title I director will work with Roosevelt's principal to incorporate relevant measures of success into the evaluation. For example, Roosevelt's compact challenges parents to see that their children attend school daily and arrive on time. Appropriate measures of how successfully parents fulfill these responsibilities include student attendance and tardiness data.

- The principal used part of the May staff development session to gather staff input on how to improve the compact.

- The parent liaison met with 25-30 parents in April to discuss evaluating the compact (as well as the parent involvement policy), and they decided to include an evaluation form for parents in the final mailing of the 1996-97 school year. Parents attending the year's final school-based decisionmaking meeting also discussed the compact and how they think it should be revised.

- A teacher who has been actively involved in the Alliance Schools Initiative and its focus on parent involvement has drafted a school staff survey to assess how staff are fulfilling their compact responsibilities.

Information from these evaluation efforts will be compiled in early fall.

Evidence of success. Students enrolled at Roosevelt show increases in achievement and attendance. Parent involvement in school-related activities has also improved:

- Student reading scores jumped from the 40th percentile in 1992-93 to the 77st in 1996-97; during the same period math scores jumped from the 16th percentile to the 73rd, and writing scores from the 58th to the 84th percentile.

- Attendance jumped over 11 percent between 1992-93 and 1994-95, the largest increase in the district.

- Forty parents regularly participate in adult education classes.

- More than 200 parents attended the first PTA meeting in 1996.

- Eighty percent of all parents whose children did not pass the TAAS attended a workshop explaining the test.

- 35-40 parents attended the parent involvement workshop in Fall 1996.

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Title 1
Parent-School Compact

The purpose of the parent-school compact is to communicate a common understanding of home and school responsibilities to assure that every student attains high standards and a quality education.

The Parents' Responsibility

- ✓ As an involved parent, I will support my son/daughter by ensuring that they attend school daily and arrive to school on time.
- ✓ I will encourage my son/daughter to participate in at least one extra curricular activity.
- ✓ I will seek information regarding my son's/daughter's progress by conferencing with teachers, principals and other school district personnel.
- ✓ I will attend district wide parent conferences and visit my son's/daughter's classrooms to discuss and participate in their education.
- ✓ I will participate in as many parent groups/activities to contribute to the decision making process within the Dallas Public Schools.
- ✓ I will communicate positive information regarding teachers, principals, and other campus personnel when discussing school with my son/daughter.
- ✓ I will encourage my son/daughter to follow the rules and regulations of the school.
- ✓ I will encourage my son/daughter to dress according to the district's dress code.

The School's Responsibility

- ✓ Roosevelt High School will solicit parent and community input (through meetings, interviews, questionnaires, surveys, etc.) regarding the education of the students it serves.
- ✓ Roosevelt will offer flexible scheduling of parent meetings, training sessions, assemblies, school functions to maximize parent participation.
- ✓ Roosevelt will provide translations of written notifications and interpreters at parent conferences, parent meetings and training sessions.
- ✓ Roosevelt will give assignments at least once per week. Assignments will be an extension of what is learned in the classroom and not merely "busy work" or untaught concepts that may cause parents and students undue stress at home.
- ✓ Parents will be notified of school events in a timely, efficient manner.
- ✓ Training sessions/workshops will be offered to parents and community members relative to diverse topics and issues.
- ✓ The school building will be used to foster the growth and advancement of the community by offering its usage for parent training workshops, ESL classes, adult basic education classes, computer classes etc.) before, during and after the regular school day.
- ✓ Roosevelt will convey instructional thrusts and initiatives to parents at school-wide meetings and parent conferences.
- ✓ Roosevelt will inform parents of the individual achievement levels of students.

STUDENT	DATE
PARENT	DATE
TEACHER	DATE

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Sherwood Heights Elementary School
Auburn, Maine

Stimulating Parent Interest in School Planning

Sherwood Heights Elementary School in the Auburn, Maine, School District enrolls over 500 students in grades K-6. During the 1996-97 school year, Sherwood Heights served about 350 students in grades K-3; beginning in fall 1997, students through grade 6 will also attend the school. Ninety-nine percent of the school's students are white, and roughly 50 percent of the students transfer into or out of the school each year. Sherwood Heights operates a schoolwide program with 61 percent of the student population eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch. Four years ago Sherwood Heights received private grant money to implement an arts integration program. Students learn the core subjects through incorporating the arts, and varied academic programs are offered within this framework. For example, two multi-age clusters allow teams of instructors across grade levels to implement developmentally appropriate instructional activities in a non-graded environment. Students enrolled in the program advance at their own pace and remain with the same teachers for three years. Traditional grade level grouping is also available.

Although parents volunteered over 1,000 hours during the 1996-97 school year, attendance at parent-teacher organization (PTO) meetings usually remained in the single digits. The school offered parents little in the way of workshops or other forms of training that could help them be more active participants in their children's education. The process of developing the compact, which began this past spring, generated new-found interest among parents in school planning. Attendance at compact development meetings was more than double and sometimes more than triple that at PTO meetings. Parents began to plan activities for the 1997-98 school year to assist stakeholders in fulfilling their compact responsibilities. For example, they decided to incorporate planning for compact implementation into monthly PTO meetings and to rename these meetings (PTO/Compact meetings) to reflect the new emphasis on implementing the compact. Several parents, staff, and district representatives report that giving parents the opportunity to work as equal partners with teachers to design a school-parent compact has increased parent interest in school planning and reform.

Creating the compact. The state of Maine and the Auburn School Department have taken an active role in supporting schools as they develop school-parent compacts. A literacy specialist at Sherwood Heights directed the process by following a School-Parent Compact Facilitator's Guide designed by the district. Although the guide was created locally, its designers included materials prepared by RMC Research Corporation and the Maine State Department of Education. The guide focuses on training parents and teachers in four areas:

- Understanding that the school-parent compact is part of the Improving America's Schools Act, which places a heavy emphasis on parent involvement in their children's education
- Understanding high standards (Maine's Learning Results—the state's content standards and performance indicators) and how they relate to curriculum and assessment in the district

- The process of developing a compact

- Maintaining continuous communication between parents and the school

At Sherwood Heights, eight teachers (representing an array of grade-levels and specialties) and 25-35 parents volunteered to serve on the compact development committee. While all stakeholders participated in the process, teachers, parents, and students wrote their responsibilities independently of each other.

The state and district emphasized high standards for all children as being the organizing principle of the compact development process. During the first of three parent meetings, the facilitator explained the purpose of the compact as helping students achieve high standards and reviewed examples (from Maine's Learning Results) of content standards in language arts and math. Parents then divided into small groups and brainstormed approximately 50 possible compact responsibilities, dividing suggestions into those addressing parent-child relationships, reading, cultural events, homework, and parent-teacher relationships. At the second meeting, parents voted on the most important responsibilities, and the top 20 appear on the compact. At the final compact meeting, parents divided into small groups to discuss how the compact can be most effectively implemented, including whether a signature should be required of stakeholders.

Teachers and students simultaneously developed their own responsibilities. To involve the staff in the training process, the facilitator met with the school's team leaders, a group of teachers who serve the equivalent of a site-based decisionmaking committee. The team leaders explained the purpose of the compact to other staff, who then submitted suggestions for their responsibilities. The input was compiled and voted on by the entire faculty, who selected 12 of 18 responsibilities to appear on the compact. The guidance counselor solicited input from students by asking them to write or draw pictures of ways they can be better students, and used all 16 of the student responsibility suggestions for the compact.

Using the compact. Sherwood Heights completed its compact in June 1997. It was immediately introduced to about 35 parents at a compact committee meeting and sent home with all students prior to the end of the school year for parental review. With the influx of new students and parents expected in the fall, administrators and staff anticipate some modifications. For example, the facilitator hopes that entering fourth through sixth graders will form a student council that can review and revise student responsibilities. Also, stakeholders plan to discuss its use at the monthly PTO/Compact meetings beginning this fall. PTO officials hope to provide child care during these meetings to maintain high attendance. Other suggestions for putting the compact to use include installing voice mail for teachers so that parents can easily communicate with them about their children's school work or homework, for example.

Building stakeholder capacity. Parents and teachers who developed the compact share the principal's concern for how the school can support stakeholders in fulfilling their compact responsibilities. Suggestions include:

- Providing parent workshops during PTO/Compact meetings to assist parents in fulfilling their compact responsibilities. These might include sessions about how to engage children in learning activities during the nonschool hours, for example.

- A newsletter to keep parents abreast of the compact's effect on the school, remind them of their responsibilities, and inform them of upcoming school events and activities.

- A parent workshop will be held at the beginning of the school year to review and discuss the Maine's Learning Results.

- Up to 15 family library nights during the 1997-98 school year will build parent's comfort using library resources so that they will begin to use libraries more often with their children.

- A video explaining the school-parent compact and how to use it to support student learning will be available for check-out by all parents.

The compact as a work in progress: supporting continuous improvement. Schools in Auburn are expected to use several sources to evaluate the effectiveness of the school-parent compacts and other school reform efforts. To measure student achievement, Sherwood Heights plans to use results from the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and the Maine Educational Assessment, a statewide test administered to all fourth graders annually. Additionally, an ongoing discussion about compact implementation issues and improvement will take place at monthly PTO/Compact meetings. Attendance logs from the monthly meetings, parent-teacher conferences, family library nights and school volunteer activities will be used to monitor parent involvement. Surveys on compact effectiveness will also be administered to students, staff, and parents during the school year.

The district plans to conduct discussion groups with stakeholder representatives from every school to assess their progress in fulfilling compact responsibilities and obtain feedback about how compacts can be revised to have more impact at the school level.

Evidence of success. Sherwood Heights parents volunteer for a variety of activities at school, including directly working with students:

- Each week about 12 parents volunteer to tutor and mentor students having difficulty with academics.

- Four times each year 30 parents volunteer to help with an "arts integration day" when all students participate in artistic activities.

- Each day 8-12 parents volunteer at the school, usually working with students in the classroom or library.

- Three times each year, all students perform at a family night. The principal reports these are well attended.

- About 97 percent of parents attend two scheduled parent conferences each year; teachers contact parents who cannot or do not attend.

- Each month the school sponsors a Good Citizenship Assembly; one grade-level performs and about 50-60 parents attend regularly.

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What is a School-Parent Compact?

The **School-Parent Compact** is a voluntary agreement between the school and the parents of the children at that school. A compact outlines how parents, the school staff and students will share responsibility for improved student achievement in meeting the Learning Results.

Compacts:

- begin with standards;
- are a process;
- define everyone's responsibilities; and
- depend on many people believing and using it.

How will we support the Compact at Sherwood Heights School?

- Open house in the fall.
- Parent-Teacher Conferences.
- Regularly scheduled School Parent Compact/PTO Mtgs.
- Parent and community volunteers
- Bates mentors.
- Family library nights.
- Arts integration.
- Good citizen assembly monthly.
- Communication between parents and teachers concerning homework assignments and other issues (voice mail and e-mail if possible).
- Information about the learning results (access on the Internet if possible).
- Informational meetings (reading and math strategies).
- Students' responsibilities posted in each classroom and reviewed on a regular basis.
- Video of the School Parent Compact and What it Means sent home to parents who can't attend initial meetings in the fall.
- Newsletters (School Parent Compact Newsletter/some Classroom Newsletters).

Fleet Bank

BOLSTER HEIGHTS HEALTH CARE FACILITY
A Division of Central Maine Long-Term Care, Inc.

BATH BRUNSWICK SAVINGS

How will we know that our Compact is working?

- Discussions held during regularly scheduled School Parent Compact/ PTO Meetings.
- Attendance logs from Parent-Teacher Conferences, School Parent Compact/PTO Meetings, informational meetings, family library nights and volunteer sign in forms.
- Student, staff and parent responses from evaluations.

The Auburn School Department does not discriminate in the operation of its educational and employment policies and will honor all appropriate laws relative to discrimination.

Sherwood Heights School

Superstars
Sherwood Heights

School-Parent Compact

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Auburn School Department

Working collaboratively so that all students learn and succeed in a changing world

Students' Responsibilities

- Listen to the teacher.
- Pay attention in class.
- Follow directions.
- Stay on task.
- Do all of your homework always.
- Read lots of good books.
- Ask for extra work to practice - practice everything.
- Get help from the teacher. Help others.
- Think hard. Try. Learn.
- Always keep a number 2 pencil and other supplies by your side.
- Be a good listener.
- Make good choices. Behave in school.
- Respect and obey all of the teachers.
- Respect others.
- Be a good citizen.
- Go to bed at bedtime. Get up on time. Eat a good breakfast.

Staff's Responsibilities

- Teach children at appropriate levels using a variety of strategies.
- Encourage students to be good citizens.
- Expect and reinforce proper behavior.
- Enrich student's learning through arts integration.
- Monitor child's progress, reteach if necessary.
- Send positive notes home, as appropriate.
- Get to know each child and be able to teach each child.
- Make school interesting to all students.
- Expect all children to achieve.
- Create classroom setting that is stimulating but not intimidating.
- Make school interesting for both parents and children -- encourage parents to feel a part of school.
- Meet and communicate with parents at beginning of year and throughout the year.

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Parents' Responsibilities

- Attend parent conferences.
- Establish a daily reading routine.
- Acknowledge it is okay to make mistakes.
- Encourage discussion with child about school day.
- Listen to your child.
- Be involved if there are problems.
- Visit libraries, museums and cultural events.
- Equip children with necessary materials.
- Back up discipline measures.
- Encourage extra work at home (workbooks, software, journals, games). Make it fun!
- Contact teachers when there are concerns or lack of communication.
- Give children lots of praise.
- Establish "family time" - sharing, talking.
- Validate your child's thoughts and feelings.
- Limit T.V. viewing; turn off the T.V.
- Empty and check backpacks.
- Help with homework; create time; check to see if child understands; check and sign assignment sheet.
- Volunteer